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Statement submitted by Fundación Novia Salcedo, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

In this written statement, Fundación Novia Salcedo, which is helping young people to become more employable, wishes to highlight the growing inequalities between and within generations that are ever more dramatically affecting youth at the global level, focusing on the situation of young people in our immediate vicinity.

Academics and institutions have found that the youth labour market suffers from some features that distinguish it from the adult market and that are preventing young people from fully participating in that market (Flek, Hála and Mysiková, 2017; O'Reilly, Smith, Nazio and Moyart, 2017). These features are: above average unemployment rates, high percentages of unintended temporary or part-time work, difficulty of changing jobs, low level of entrepreneurship and self-employment and considerable differences among young people as regards training. There is also agreement that, although this problem existed prior to the 2008 crisis, it has worsened over the last decade, aggravating inequality between the younger and the more mature generations and between the more and the less fortunate youth sectors, threatening to create chronic job insecurity and to have lasting consequences for the professional development and the lives of young people.

In the immediate vicinity of the Fundación Novia Salcedo, the Basque Autonomous Community (traditionally one of the most prosperous and developed regions of Spain) has an unemployment rate of 27 per cent for young men and 27.4 per cent for young women (report on the labour market situation of young people in the Basque Autonomous Community, Lanbide, 2017). The average salary of young people has declined by 21 per cent on average since 2008. In addition, unemployment rates are considerably higher for the least educated. This also perpetuates inequality between family units with different at different social and economic levels. Both an official body (the Organisation for European Co-operation and Development (OECD)) and researchers (O'Reilly and colleagues, 2017) have found that cultural transmission in families makes it difficult for people whose parents have little education to aspire to higher education levels themselves. For example, in Spain inter-generational educational mobility is particularly low: more than half the adults whose parents did not benefit from advanced secondary education did not reach that level either. Lastly, among young people with the highest education levels, there is often a discrepancy between their level of education and their first job, for which they are over-qualified. This has a negative effect on all young people. On the one hand, those with less training find that the jobs for which they were trained have been taken. On the other hand, young people with more education are working in jobs at a level and with pay lower than what they should accept and in sectors other than those in which they are interested in the long term. This makes it difficult for them to find jobs commensurate with their training, to negotiate pay rises subsequently and to develop professionally in the areas where their interests really lie.

The Fundación Novia Salcedo has been helping young people to become more employable for almost 40 years, focusing on enabling those with advanced training to find work suited to their training and interests. In order to do so, it is providing training and guidance to provide young men and young women with a compass to guide their first steps in the complex labour market. From this range of initiatives, we should like in this statement to single out two: paid internships in firms and the LanAldi programme to help young people.

The programme of paid internships gives young people who have completed university studies or advanced vocational studies an opportunity for an initial contact with the world of work for a period of up to 12 months. In order to make this experience as useful as possible for the interns and not a source of job insecurity, we

set quality standards reflecting those advocated by ILO: in addition to the time limitation, monitoring of the intern's development and of the work of his or her mentor in the company, and payment of a stipend roughly equivalent to the minimum wage. The stipend helps to meet some of the intern's needs and provides initial support for the construction of a plan for independent living, while dignifying the work done for the firm. OECD notes that the initial experience in the labour market has a profound influence on later working life, since it is the starting-point for negotiating the conditions of subsequent experiences. Thus receipt of earnings approximating the minimum wage is a starting-point from which young people can begin to improve their working conditions in subsequent jobs.

Secondly, the LanAldi programme brings young people still receiving advanced secondary education closer to the world of work. The goal is for young people to familiarize themselves, through various activities, with the work environment for the jobs which they find most interesting. It provides vocational guidance at a point when young people still have time to decide which higher or secondary studies they wish to pursue and thus minimizes job switching once they have started working. If they can start by acquiring work experience in the professional area in which they will find themselves in the long term, they will be able to start off in jobs with better working conditions and this will directly impact their quality of life.

In conclusion, we should like to mention some public policies that can help to improve the situation of young people, based on our own experience and on the proposals made by organizations (Lanbide, OECD) and academics (O'Reilly and colleagues, 2017). As an organization with a limited sphere of action, we can identify a series of issues that could be tackled by other organizations and through collaboration among the various stakeholders working to promote the all-round development of young people. Firstly, in order to bridge generation gaps in terms of knowledge of the labour market, it would be interesting for new recruits to be mentored by people with extensive work experience. Handing the torch to the next generation would thus not create a brain drain for firms but would reduce the inequality between younger and older workers in term of skills and know-how. Secondly, organizations and education centres should enhance their collaboration so that they can provide an entry into the world of work for the young men and women graduating from the education system. In addition, there should be programmes to help young people who chose to train in areas in which job placement is difficult. In the current context, this is true of training in the humanities and the arts. It is crucial to help these young people to find a place in the labour market where they can develop professionally, since a knowledge-based society and economy cannot afford the luxury of letting so much human and intellectual capital go to waste.

Lastly, the inequalities affecting young people must be tackled because, in addition to their negative consequences for those experiencing them, they can seriously jeopardize global society as a whole.